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Prime Minister's schedule, December 3

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 4, 2009

10:15 Met State Minister for Government Revitalization Unit Sengoku and Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsui at the Prime Minister's Official Residence.
11:11 Met Foreign Minister Okada and Vice Foreign Minister Yabunaka. Followed by Cabinet Office Senior Vice Minister Furukawa.
13:30 Met Cabinet Intelligence Director Mitani.
14:06 Met Okada, Defense Minister Kitazawa and Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano.
15:07 Met Japan Association of Bioindustries Executive President Katsuhiro Utada and others, with Lower House member Jojima.
15:42 Met Upper House members Odachi and Kimata.
16:03 Met the Finance Ministry's three executive parliamentary

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officials, including Foreign Minister Fujii, Vice Minister Tango, and Budget Bureau Director General Katsu.

17:15 Met National Strategy Minister Kan, Hirano, Matsui, and Furukawa. Hirano, Matsui and Furukawa stayed behind.

18:02 Met Hungarian President Solyom. Held a joint press conference.

19:02 Hosted a dinner party for Solyom.

20:17 Saw off Solyom.

20:30 Arrived at his official residential quarters.

4) Coalition takes priority over Japan-U.S. alliance in decision to delay Futenma solution to 2010

SANKEI (Top play) (Abridged)
December 4, 2009

As of Dec. 3, it had become difficult to settle the issue of the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa) before the end of the year, which the U.S. side is demanding. Social Democratic Party (SDP) leader Mizuho Fukushima (state minister for consumer affairs and declining birthrate) voiced strong objection to a decision based on the existing relocation plan under the previous Japan-U.S. agreement on the same day, threatening to bolt the coalition government. In reaction to this, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama indicated his stance of attaching importance to the coalition and his intention to respect the SDP's wishes.

A solution to the Futenma relocation issue has been deferred to next year because Hatoyama gave higher priority to maintaining the coalition government for the time being than to an early solution to the Futenma issue, which is undermining the Japan-U.S. alliance relationship.

If the Prime Minister makes a decision to respect the Japan-U.S. agreement to relocate the Futenma base to Henoko in Nago City, Okinawa, the SDP is certain to leave the coalition. Under the present situation where the Democratic Party of Japan parliamentary group alone does not control a majority in the House of Councillors, the SDP's departure will deal a serious blow to the administration. Furthermore, Hatoyama will be occupied with dealing with economic stimulus measures and the suspected false reporting of his political funds before year end. He will not have enough energy to work on the Futenma issue.

5) SDP hints at leaving coalition; Hatoyama instructs ministers to explain Japan's circumstances to U.S.

SANKEI (Page 1) (Excerpts)
December 4, 2009

"If the cabinet decides to construct a base in the waters off Henoko, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and I will have to make an important decision," SDF head Mizuho Fukushima said during a meeting of party executives yesterday. Under the current plan, an alternative facility to the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station would be constructed in a coastal area of U.S. Camp Schwab in the

Henoko district of Nago City, Okinawa Prefecture.

Fukushima indicated, with the expression "an important decision," that the SDP would not hesitate to leave the coalition government.

In response, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama told reporters last

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evening: "The SDP is a ruling coalition partner, so we must seriously consider its views." He also said: "We must reach a speedy conclusion so as not to allow any more accidents to occur at the Futenma base." But he does not necessarily have any specific plan in mind that would bring about a solution to the Futenma issue by the end of the year.

Prior to this, Hatoyama met with Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, and Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano and instructed them to explain the Japanese side's circumstances to the U.S., saying: "I would like you to talk to the U.S. in a sincere manner."

6) Transport minister welcomes Osaka governor's positive stance about accepting Futenma facility

SANKEI (Page 5) (Full)
December 4, 2009

Osaka Governor Toru Hashimoto has indicated that he would consider a plan to move the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture, to Kansai International Airport. Speaking before reporters in Tokyo yesterday, Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism Minister Seiji Maehara (state minister for Okinawa, northern territories, and disaster prevention) welcomed this development. He said: "Although I have not heard anything concrete, I appreciate Mr. Hashimoto's exercising leadership in meetings of the National Governors' Association and encouraging them to offer a helping hand (to resolve the Futenma issue)."

7) PNP, SDP strengthen cooperative ties

YOMIURI (Page 1) (Full)
December 4, 2009

The People's New Party (PNP) is keeping step with the Social Democratic Party (SDP) regarding the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station.

PNP leader Shizuka Kamei, state minister for financial affairs, categorically said in a speech yesterday in Tokyo, "If the SDP and PNP do not agree, the Okinawa base issue will not be resolved. Even if the United States and the Okinawa governor approve (of the relocation of the base within Okinawa), we will not give our approval."

Yesterday Mikio Shimoji and Tomoko Abe, the policy chiefs of the two parties, called on Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa and told him about their meeting on Dec. 2 with Osaka Gov. Toru Hashimoto, who had said that the burden on Okinawa should be shared by the whole nation. Kitazawa expressed his willingness to hold talks with Hashimoto.

Shimoji had apparently intended to meet alone with Hashimoto initially, but he later asked Abe to attend the meeting. The purpose of the SDP and PNP stepping up their cooperation on the Futenma issue is to secure their political influence. All the more because the SDP is hinting at the possibility of leaving the coalition government, PNP members are saying things like, "This is a good chance for us to make special requests regarding other issues to the Democratic Party of Japan, which has been acting weak."

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8) Okinawa governor in hot seat; anti-relocation forces gaining momentum; Nago mayoral election may be affected

Now that the government has effectively given up on reaching a settlement on the issue of relocating the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station before year's end, Okinawa Gov. Hirokazu Nakaima, who has accepted the existing relocation plan based on a Japan-U.S. agreement, finds himself in a tighter spot than ever before. In Okinawa, anti-relocation forces calling for relocation out of the prefecture or even out of the country are gaining momentum. At the same time, the government's decision to postpone a conclusion has given rise to speculation that Futenma will never be returned to Japan. The decision is also likely to have an impact on next January's Nago mayoral election, for which the Futenma relocation is the major campaign issue.

"Moving Futenma outside the prefecture is the best option, but as the person charged with administration, I think the matter will take a substantial amount of time," Nakaima said in response to a question about the relocation issue in a prefectural assembly question-and-answer session yesterday. "It would make things less complicated if I say 'outside the prefecture,' but I have not changed my basic policy." The Liberal Democratic Party Okinawa chapter, which has supported Nakaima, has also decided to call for moving Futenma outside the prefecture if the matter is not resolved before the end of the year. Nakaima expressed his personal struggle to the press corps: "The situation will push me further to deal with the matter in line with the prefectural people's desire to move Futenma outside Okinawa."

In the Nago mayoral race, chances are that there will be a head-on clash between the incumbent supporting the existing plan and a newcomer opposing the relocation. "If the incumbent is defeated, chances of a solution to the Futenma issue will diminish," Nago City Council Chairman Kenyu Shimabukuro said angrily. On the other hand, Prefectural assembly deputy chairman Yoshikazu Tamashiro from Nago welcomed the government's step, saying, "If the government decided to accept the existing plan, the people in Okinawa would give a thumbs down. Coming this far, I want the government to take time to reach a conclusion."

Meanwhile, residents of Ginowan, home to Futenma Air Station, do not conceal their dismay. Kamiojana community association chairperson Chieko Oshiro, 55, said: "I know that it will not be easy to move the base outside the prefecture. Whether within or outside the prefecture, I just want the danger of the air station moved as soon as possible." Ginowan Mayor Yoichi Iha said: "Although there is no need to insist on reaching a settlement on the existing plan before the end of the year, Futenma Air Station must be closed down at the earliest possible time."

9) Concern widespread about impact on Japan-U.S. relations

"It is a matter for the ruling coalition to decide in the end, so it's meaningless for us to think about it," a senior Foreign Ministry official said with an air of resignation. "Unless the

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Futenma issue is settled, the bilateral alliance will not be deepened as was agreed on in the recent Japan-U.S. summit." Concerns about a possible impact on Japan-U.S. relations are rising in the foreign and defense ministries all the more because they have been making arrangements for a settlement within the year.

A Japan-U.S. ministerial-level working group will meet today at the Foreign Ministry. The meeting is scheduled to be attended by Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa, U.S. Ambassador to Japan John Roos, U.S. Forces Japan Commander Edward Rice, and others. The Japanese side is expected to inform the U.S. side of its decision to give up on reaching a conclusion before year's end. The working group has been set up in line with Okada and Roos's eagerness "to reach a conclusion expeditiously." As such,

Japan's decision is likely to draw a strong backlash from the U.S. side.

The Defense Ministry plans to include Futenma relocation-related funds, such as an environmental impact assessment, in its fiscal 2010 budget plan. "This is intended to demonstrate Japan's sincerity toward the United States. Once the stage is set for talks, they will be implemented immediately," a ministry official explained.

Meanwhile, Okinawa's Nago City, the relocation site for Futenma under the existing relocation plan, will carry out a mayoral election next January, and the Democratic Party of Japan and the Social Democratic Party are backing an anti-relocation candidate. Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama has hinted at reaching a decision after the Nago race, but Diet deliberations on the FY2010 budget will begin shortly after that. A settlement might be further delayed as a House of Councillors election will take place in the summer. Some foreign and defense ministry officials are concerned that a postponement due to domestic circumstances might result in distrust on the part of the U.S.

10) PM Hatoyama orders DM Kitazawa to find new Futenma relocation site; decision postponed until next year

YOMIURI (Top play) (Abridged)
December 4, 2009

It was learned on Dec. 3 that with regard to the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama asked Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa to "find a new site," ordering him to find a relocation site other than the coastal area of Camp Schwab (in Henoko, Nago City, Okinawa). The Prime Minister's instruction is regarded as a de facto order to consider a relocation site from scratch. It is believed that Hatoyama has decided to postpone a decision on the Futenma issue until next year because the search for a new relocation site will take time.

Hatoyama told reporters on the evening of Dec. 3 that, "We are not discussing the issue on the premise that it has to be decided within the year," stating openly that the decision will be deferred to next year.

Earlier, Hatoyama had met with Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano, Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada, and Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa at the Prime Minister's Official Residence in the late afternoon to discuss the meeting of the Japan-U.S. cabinet level working group of foreign and defense ministers to be held in Tokyo on Dec. 4. He said at the meeting that, "The coalition is important.

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I want you to talk to the U.S. in good faith," asking the ministers to seek the U.S. side's understanding. Hatoyama has been meeting with Hirano, Okada, and Kitazawa on a daily basis for the past few days, and his order to look for a new relocation site came out during these meetings.

11) Gov't to earmark U.S. military relocation costs in FY2010 budget

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 4, 2009

In connection with the planned relocation of the U.S. military's Futenma base in Okinawa Prefecture, the Defense Ministry will earmark costs relating to the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan in its budget for next fiscal year, a top-level official of the Defense Ministry said yesterday. The ministry is going to include the relocation costs in its budget request although the Futenma relocation issue is not expected to be settled before the year is out. "Our bilateral agreement between Japan and the United States has not collapsed," the official said. "If we don't include the relocation costs, we will lose the United States' faith," the official added.

The Defense Ministry has already earmarked a total of approximately 89 billion yen in its budget estimate relating to the U.S. force

realignment, including about 35.3 billion yen for moving U.S. Marines from Okinawa to Guam and about 28.8 billion yen for relocating the Futenma base.

12) Planned exchange of views between Okada and Okinawa residents cancelled

YOMIURI (Page 4) (Full)
December 4, 2009

The Democratic Party of Japan Okinawa chapter had planned to hold a session on Dec. 5 in Itoman City for the exchange of views between Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada and residents of Okinawa Prefecture, but the planned session was suddenly cancelled. Although the DPJ Okinawa chapter planned to open the session to the public, the Foreign Minister's side objected. Therefore, arrangements for the plan hit a snag.

13) Kitazawa mulls meeting Hashimoto

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 4, 2009

Defense Minister Toshimi Kitazawa met yesterday in his Defense Ministry office with Tomoko Abe, chair of the policy board of the Social Democratic Party, one of the ruling Democratic Party of Japan's two coalition partners, and Mikio Shimoji, chair of the People's New Party, the DPJ's other coalition partner. In the meeting, Shimoji and Abe proposed using Kansai International Airport as a relocation site for some of U.S. fighter jets' training missions currently conducted at the Kadena base in Okinawa Prefecture. In this regard, they requested that Kitazawa meet with Osaka Gov. Tohru Hashimoto. Kitazawa said he will consider the request.

14) LDP, Komeito call for gov't to settle Futenma issue within the

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year

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 4, 2009

Liberal Democratic Party President Sadakazu Tanigaki and New Komeito President Natsuo Yamaguchi met yesterday evening at a Tokyo hotel and agreed to call for the government to settle the pending issue of relocating the U.S. military's Futenma base within the year. This was the first meeting of the two party leaders.

15) ANA, two U.S. carriers to integrate flight routes: Envisaged open skies agreement spurs reorganization

NIKKEI (Page 9) (Excerpts)
December 4, 2009

All Nippon Airways (ANA) and two leading U.S. air carriers, United Airlines and Continental Airlines, will basically integrate their passenger flight businesses in the fall of 2010. They will deepen their existing business tie-ups, triggered by the envisaged open skies agreement between Japan and the U.S., so as to be ready for competition between the two countries becoming increasingly fierce in the future. The next focus of attention will be on steps taken by Japan Air Lines, which also holds a major share of flights between the two countries.

The governments of Japan and the U.S. will likely reach a consensus to conclude an open skies agreement next week and put it into practice next year. ANA and its partner carriers intend to apply for antitrust immunity (ATI) status with the Transport Ministry and the U.S. Department of Transportation. Approval will likely be granted in October 2010 at the earliest in both countries. The three carriers estimate an increase in revenues totaling several tens of billion yen as a result of increased income and cost reductions.

The three carriers, members of the Star Alliance, will provide optimum numbers of seats based on demand by adjusting their flight

routes and the number of flights. The three carriers also plan to improve efficiency by ANA taking over operations for its U.S. partners at airport counters and administrative duties for their business in Japan, and vice-versa in the U.S.

Once the open skies agreement is materialized, access to Japan-U.S. routes will become, in principle, liberalized. How much market entry will occur is unclear because landing and departure slots available at Japanese airports are limited. However, there is a strong possibility that price competition will become more intense.

16) Government to finance private companies' securing rare-metal rights

NIKKEI (Page 5) (Full)
December 4, 2009

The Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) has decided to set up a new government-financed body to help private companies obtain rights related to rare metals. According to the plan, the government will invest in projects for joint production of rare metals by the private and public sectors to help companies smoothly obtain mining rights. Government investment will amount to several hundred million yen per project. The government will also support

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companies in securing rare metals, over which international competition is becoming fierce.

METI will incorporate the measure into an additional economic stimulus package, which the government will formulate on Dec. 4. Since the weak-dollar trend is continuing on the foreign exchange market, METI plans to become proactively involved in projects to develop resources overseas. The measure is a pillar of the program designed to address the strong yen to be included in the economic pump-priming package.

Under the plan, METI will enable the Japan Oil, Gas, Metals National Corporation (JOGMEC), an independent administrative agency, to newly finance private companies when they produce rare metals in Africa or South America. JOGMEC is allowed to finance petroleum or natural gas companies at the stage of production. However, there has been no system allowing it to assist private companies producing mineral resources.

Government-guaranteed loans will also be made available to companies when they need funds at the development or production stage of rare metals. METI intends to set up a guarantee framework worth several hundred billion yen so that companies can secure funds flexibly in the event of a rise in the yen or a fall in resource prices. METI will submit a bill amending the JOGMEC Establishment Law to the regular session of the Diet next year.

17) Japan, U.S. agree to strengthen management of nuclear materials in preparatory meeting for Nuclear Security Summit

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Full)
December 4, 2009

The governments of Japan and the U.S. held a preparatory meeting for the Nuclear Security Summit (NSS). At the NSS, participants will discuss how to bring about a nuclear-free world, an initiative proposed by U.S. President Barack Obama. The meeting, chaired by Laura Holgate, who is responsible for antiterrorism at the U.S. National Security Council (NSC), brought together concerned vice ministers and bureau chiefs from 43 countries, including countries that possess nuclear weapons and nuclear power plants. They affirmed the importance of strengthening the management system of nuclear weapons.

Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama told reporters at the Prime Minister's Official Residence last night: "How to ensure the security of the world is a very important theme in discussions. Japan, as the only nation to have suffered nuclear bombing, must take the initiative in an effort to eliminate nuclear weapons."

In his speech in Prague this April, President Obama reiterated the importance of major powers' nuclear arms reduction and called for countermeasures to the use of nuclear weapons by terrorists, focusing on the growing risk of nuclear proliferation.

18) Foreign Ministry sets up new office on child custody

MAINICHI (Page 12) (Excerpts)
Evening, December 3, 2009

Tetsu Kudo

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In response to recent troubles in connection with international parental child abduction, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs set up an office in charge of issues related to child custody in order to look into the possibility of Japan's joining the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, which stipulates rules to solve disputes related to international marriages. Giving consideration to criticism by the United States and Europe that problems have occurred because Japan has not yet joined the Convention, MOFA has launched a consultative body of working-level officials on issues related to child custody with France, a leader in discussions on the issue.

Foreign Minister Katsuya Okada stated at a press conference yesterday: "Various Issues, including how to deal with the existing issues and the propriety of Japan's participation in the Convention, will be discussed at the consultative body. We want to look into Japan's response as quickly as possible."

Meanwhile, in the first talks with France held yesterday in MOFA, France reportedly presented 35 cases involving parental child abduction and called on Japan to take specific measures to deal with the cases. MOFA will soon set up a similar consultative framework with the United States.

ROOS